



Volunteer Fire Assistance

State of Alaska Division of Forestry

November 2011

Where Does the Funding Come From?

USDA Forest Service awards Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) funding to the State of Alaska, Division of Forestry (DOF) each federal fiscal year to pass through to rural volunteer fire departments.

Due to federal budget constraints Rural Fire Assistance (RFA) funding is not available to apply for.

Application Process Overview

- *Criteria and application for VFA funding is mailed from the DOF Central Office to all volunteer fire departments registered with the State Fire Marshall's office in November or early December of each year. A maximum of \$20,000 per department is available to apply for. The criteria and application are also available on Forestry's web site <http://forestry.alaska.gov/fire/vfa.htm>*
- *Application period is from December 15th – March 15th. Applications must be completed by VFDs and postmarked or date stamped by March 15th. VFDs submit applications to nearest DOF office as stated in application package.*
- *Review application for completeness prior to submitting!*
- *In the spring an interagency committee meets to award funding.*

VFA Grant Basic Criteria

- *Serve a population of 10,000 or less.*
- *Be registered with Alaska State Fire Marshall's office.*
- *Be in compliance with past VFA grant awards.*
- *Submittal of documentation of matching funds with application.*
- *Submittal of signed Certifications, Assurances & Drug Free Workplace forms with application.*
- *Application postmarked/date stamped by March 15th.*

Ineligible for VFA funding

- *Repair, construction or purchase of buildings.*
- *Land acquisition.*
- *Pressurized waterlines and hydrants.*
- *Emergency medical equipment.*
- *Any equipment not fire related.*
- *Footwear/boots.*
- *Normal operating expenses.*
- *Any single item costing \$4999.99 or more.*

Documentation of Match

- Matching funds must be at least 10% of total funding requested.
- Copies of invoices or cancelled checks can be used as match documentation.
- Federal funds can not be used as match for federal funds.
- For matching purposes up to \$2,000.00 of in-kind services may be used.

In-kind services can consist of:

Unpaid attendance at fire protection training courses and/or workshops at the equivalent pay rate of E77 3 (\$15.45 in 2011). Paid attendance at normal rate of pay if an employee of the VFD. Copy of roster of the course or workshop required with signatures, date, title and brief description of the class/workshop.

Time, equipment, space, staff salaries, etc. These items come from another budget but are committed to the goals of the project for which you are applying for funds.

VFA Grant Award Meeting

- *An interagency committee meets to award funding in the late spring of each year. Participating Agencies - AFS/Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Division of Forestry. USDA Forest Service will participate as an observer at the grant award meeting.*
- *Total VFA requests from VFDs average over \$200,000 a year. Average amount awarded each year is approximately \$150,000 - \$190,000 and is dependant on continued receipt of federal funding.*

VFA Grant Award Meeting

Agency representatives review and discuss each application. Higher priority is given to:

- *Newly established (less than 12 months) approved fire departments.*
- *Fire departments that have not previously received VFA funding.*
- *Fire departments that have a cooperating agreement with the Alaska Division of Forestry, a Department of Interior Agency or the USDA Forest Service to attack wildland fires within their service area. Usually it is only DOF Area offices that have an agreement with a VFD.*
- *Purchase of equipment especially used on wildland fires, such as portable pumps, fold-a tanks, hose, communications equipment, etc.*
- *Training (documented; either structural or wildland).*
- *Documented match exceeds 10%.*

Post Grant Award Meeting

- *Division of Forestry will notify all VFDs who applied for VFA funding of award amounts, if any.*
- *Checks for VFA awards are typically mailed late spring/early summer with a letter from the local Forestry office outlining grant compliance requirements and post award documentation VFDs need to provide to their local Forestry office. Compliance documentation must be submitted by March 15th of the following year.*
- *Checks MUST be cashed within 6 months of issue date otherwise they will be voided.*

VFA Record Keeping

- Establish a binder for your VFA application.
- Keep copies of application, documentation of match and assurances & certifications.
- Keep copies of notes and all correspondence.
- Make a copy of any award checks.
- Prior to the next grant cycle (March 15th) submit to Forestry copies of receipts for equipment purchased with previous year grant award funds, copies of training rosters if training was funded, training materials purchased etc. All funds granted must be used for items specified in the application.
- Keep records for 5 years from grant award unless an audit is taking place, then keep for 3 years after conclusion of the audit.

The background is a solid teal color with faint, stylized leaf patterns in a slightly darker shade of teal. The leaves are scattered across the frame, with some showing prominent veins.

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Thank You